NOTE FROM THE PUBLISHER

Ibbetson Street moved to Revere, Massachusetts from its home in Somerville, Massachusetts. this past May. We will miss our birthplace but are optimistic about our new city by the sea. We have released another book of poetry by talented Endicott College undergraduate James Cerulle, *Observations Personified*. This is yet another book in the Endicott College/Ibbetson Street Press Young Writers Series.

Included in these pages are Elizabeth S. Wolf, Dan Tobin, Carla Schwartz, Alfred Nicol, Anna Holstedt, Tim Gager, Clare Scott, Dennis Daly, Kathleen Aguero, Tomas O'Leary and many other outstanding poets.

As always, we want to thank our poetry editor Harris Gardner, our managing editor Lawrence Kessenich, and our designer Steve Glines for their hard work. And of course, we are grateful to Endicott College for supporting us all these years. Special thanks to professors Dan Sklar, Sam Alexander, and Mark Herlihy for helping to keep this publication afloat. See you in the winter!

—Doug Holder, Publisher, July, 2026

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No simultaneous submissions; no poems previously published in print or online. All submissions must be sent by email only to tapestryofvoices@yahoo.com—as an attachment or pasted into the body of the email.

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QUESTIONS FOR THE EARTH

Midway upon the journey of our life
I found myself within a forest dark
-The Inferno, Canto I, Dante Alighieri

Early violet light

a rhododendron
leans its leaves against my window—

On another continent
bombs are raining,

chaos everywhere.

What will sustain?

I have questions:

Will the mountains have their birds again?

Will an algal skin
spread itself across the lake in high summer?

Will the water be too low?

Will the salmon survive?

The earth will warm.

Destruction will not turn to peace.

The bombs will continue…

yet still I hope for the forest
to open again behind us

spring careening into green air,
for lilac buds to burst into morning,

for a flood of sun
to cross the waves
as we count them one by one.

— *Ruth Chad*

NO ONE COMES HERE TO PRAY

The rain is set on delicate
to rinse away the heat and humidity
until the air smells like new
wash on a clothesline.
The cool August breeze
floats through the windows
of our rusty green Ford on the way
to the grotto. Built by a priest
rock by rock, stone by precious stone,
all carried and placed by hand.
The grotto is disturbing
in its confusion of colors.
Pathways wind into caves
depicting the life of Christ
in quartz and turquoise.
Visitors fill an empty tomb
with fresh red roses.
No one comes here to pray.
No flowing water for cures,
no visions of Our Lady.
People come here to feed their souls
with pan-fried chicken, its fragrant
incense rising in praise,
drawing us to a nearby wooden shack.

— Amy Haddad

LAST DAYS IN SOUTH GEORGIA (1)

Only one egg
this morning in the coop,
small, and palish blue.
A hungry something
wreaked feather-full gory havoc
in the spring, so
there's only the two chickens left.
And they seem mostly now
not prone
to laying.

After we sort the darks in the back closet—
wool pants, corduroys, velvet, denim—
this for now, this for later (*when*
the medicine settles down
and I'm thin again), this
for donating to the singers in the choir—
I trim half a bucket
of strawberries for our after-dinner treat,
sneak in a nearly invisible dusting of sugar,
and set the cut-off strawberry tops
on a plate near the door
for the chickens.
You say, *Oh, they'll be so happy—*
I never leave that much.

— Chris Warner

TWO WORLDS

She faded away
not because he turned to look
the myth has it all wrong
she didn't walk behind him out of deference
or misplaced misogyny
but out of ambiguity
pulled by both worlds
the bounteous world of grains and flowers
and the stygian world of wandering shades
where she walked with her ancestors
she went back because she preferred
the dark depths of Hades' embrace
to a boy-child with a lyre
she did not feel trapped in the underworld
she chose it

— *Claire Scott*

BASS ROCKS, ROCKPORT, MA

Red-brown rocks separate land from sea
reaching out to where blue water crashes
in endless yearning to reach the shore
where seagulls stand guard over their seaweed domain

Bubbles on white foam ride the water
like cities afloat on a distant planet
carrying microscopic inhabitants randomly
to private inlets among the rocks

Cormorants swimming, then disappearing
emerge, not sated and swim some more
then perch on a rock, wings spread out to dry
while seagulls struggle over a discarded sandwich

The flat rocks warm sunbather backs
while the sun turns their pale skin brown
on a summer day on Bass Rocks
where people are in harmony with nature and themselves

— *Zvi A. Sesling*

YELLOW HOUSE

A yellow house on a street cheers
the neighborhood the way walking
in the surf calms the feet, and lying
on the sun-drenched beach quiets a soul.

My house is not yellow, never was.
My house is a faded tan with a partial
stone front. None of the stones
are yellow but they give a warm,

welcoming hue. When we sit
on the deck in June, sipping
Pimms-laced iced tea, we watch
birds flitting and flirting as they

hunt down bugs, chirp and sing,
while the sundrops in the flower bed
with their golden-yellow out shine
the lilacs, yarrow, and Johnny-

jump-ups. Soon, the coreopsis
will add their bright yellow to
the luminance of our yard and bring
that small joy into our lives.

The bluebird house in the field
has a nest but no eggs, yet.
The bluebird house is not yellow,
but wood weathered dulled gray

by years of rain and snow and wind.
Perhaps I will paint the sides and
back a bright yellow so the field
could have a happy, winter glow.

— *Gary Metras*

BEAUTY

We expect perfection
In the smell and feel
Of an infant's skin,
The beautiful symmetry
Of fingers and toes.
What's unforeseen is when
Beauty appears
In unexpected places.

Petunias surprise us
Sprouting from sidewalk cracks.
In a meadow, Verbena,
Purslane and Queen Anne's lace
Question our assumptions
Of what deserves praise and when.

In the yard, a black racer
Whispers past my ankles
While a painted turtle
Puzzle-patterned shell,
Burrows beneath the fence.

And you, still beautiful,
Beside me in bed,
After all this time.

— *Ed Meek*

JAZZ SESSIONS

I dream about jam sessions. In one I was
Playing jazz on a blues harp while a young
Bob Dylan got ready to sing. You were
(of blessed memory) playing your sax.
In another I was playing flute with my
First roommate from college who was
Playing clarinet. In another I was
In the basement improvising on "Birk's Works"
While the bass player whistled. During the day
I play my flute. I am a lone player.
It is the many hundreds of jam
Sessions we played together here and in the
House on Beryl St. that haunt me.

— *Judy Katz-Levine*

ON THE ROAD TO EL PAREDON

In Guatemala, I saw a dead man by the side of the road
in dusty blue jeans resting cheek to the ground
motorcycle sleeping on its side a few feet away
a crowd gawking at the scene like it's on TV

He rode the winding hills with confidence
feeling the familiar stiffened sweat of his faded red tee
Pebbles flew as he took each memorized turn
dazzled by the golden sky painted by the evening sun

At home his wife stirs the pepián bubbling on the ancient stove
starts the tortillas, the dough slapping against her palms
They hiss and steam as they meet the hot griddle
whose flames warm the corrugated walls

He'll be home soon, she tells herself
checks her phone to see if she missed a call
wipes her hands on her colorful woven apron
wrings out a faded dishtowel in the kitchen sink

She sees him at the farm packing up for the day
storing his empty lunch pail in his bag
mounting his bike, no license or helmet
which is just the way things are here

Through our car window, I see his body as we pass
No one tends to him, no sirens signal urgency
I quickly look away but too late
The image is captured like a photograph

We continue on our way to the black sand beach of El Paredon
where we will kayak in the mangroves
take a sunset ride on the river to the sea
marvel at the wisp of ash from Fuego in the distance

The only giant turtle we see is a dead one
a vulture riding on its shell

—Betsy Gitelman

HOW TO VAN GOGH

You thought you knew crows
and gas lamps, but no. What
your eyes winnow, he lets in.

The matter in things,
the swirl of atoms, the hectic
worry of surfaces,

the fear that this
might metamorphose into that—
so many surprises.

Little Marcelle stares, fleshed
in thick pink paint,
awkward in her mother's

hands which tremble
between claws and tree roots.
Yellow wall,

yellow fields, faces, flowers
—sad yellows,
more mustard than sun—

sublime those yellows say:
this being alive,
and trouble too, and pain.

— *Ruth Hoberman*

LAMENT

Death's now, the makers of my time.
"Of force I mon his next prey be:
Timor Mortis conturbat me." *
And so forgive the things I say.
I have been trying to tell the truth,

and to rhyme it somehow with time,
but I don't believe it can be done,
or that I'm the one who can,
asking a poem to demonstrate
if their conjugation is conceivable.

Neil, Danielle, Jennifer, Baron, Charles,
*"*Of force I mon his next prey be:
Timor Mortis conturbat me."
They the same as we. As I!
Death's now, the makers of my time,

who were my friends, our glasses raised
to cheer ourselves by cheering one
another as the books appeared,
dullness the only thing we feared,
pixels and ink now, otherwise time's

debris. Their work's what's left, read it
or not, same as always. Their discoveries
and felicities belong to us now,
secret pleasures and reassurances
that at just the right time are the truth.

— *Richard Hoffman*

**William Dunbar, "Lament for the Makaris" c. 1505*

WINDEX

That tiny squeak. I heard it while polishing
The bathroom mirror. Just brief and shrill enough
To conjure up that unexpected, surprisingly
High-pitched cry that came from Joe the butcher.
Unspeakable grief: he eked it out when he saw
My parents approaching him at his daughter's wake.

Joe and Mary Vitagliano's grocery
Store was across the street from my father's store.
If our shelves ran out of something, my cousins and I
Were sent to buy it from Joe and Mary. Just as
Their daughter Nina would get what they needed from us.
And this went on until we left for college.

That hulking, bald, congenial fellow grocer.
All day on his feet cutting meat, yet never tired
Of seeing a customer enter his store. As soon
As the door creaked open, his big round face lit up.
Then towering over his block, and wielding his cleaver
Like nothing, he talk-talk-talked as he chop-chop-chopped.

But at the wake for his daughter, the wake that over-
Flowed the funeral parlor, Joe the butcher
Stood by the casket by sitting down. And barely
Looked up as the mourners advanced. His only child
Had drowned on her Cayman Islands vacation. His only
Child, who loved to swim off Winthrop Beach…

It all came back to me on sudden reflection,
While wiping down the bathroom mirror with Windex:
That tiny squeak, as if he was trying to speak.

— *George Kalogeris*

BEARSKIN NECK, ROCKPORT, MA

The sun, still strong as it sinks low,
paints long blue shadows in the lanes
between the shops all in a row,
adds orange glints on window panes.

Stores are jammed with artful wares:
silver pendants, hand-blown glass,
silk-screened t-shirts, sculpted bears,
watercolor prints of bass.

This shop has figurines of pigs
and tall ceramic mugs with whales;
another, sea-themed whirligigs.
We see so many windswept sails

in paintings that go on and on.
Landscapes, seascapes in galleries,
vie with Motif #1;
here's the real thing down this alley.

It sits on quarried granite blocks,
a fish shack painted Weathered Red--
buoys on the side, boats at the docks--
with gulls careening overhead.

We've come for this authentic view,
to feel the spray, the fresh salt breeze;
we'll leave the trinkets, old and new,
etch in our minds these silky seas.

— *Priscilla Turner Spada*

FIRST DAY

She's much too young, eighteen or nineteen,
to mark milestones, but this Monday morning
marks her first day as a licensed hair stylist,
with an assigned chair, table and mirror, with
everything she'll need from today forward,
scissors, blow dryer, clippers, a cutting cape
in this chic, immaculate, silver and blue
hair salon in a strip mall, on this her first day,
bright-eyed and confident, her hair stylish
with waves of flouncy loose curls. And now
walks in—WALK-INS WELCOME—her first
customer ever, a little old man in a tan jacket
that he doesn't slip off but unzips partway,
in a dress shirt and new khaki cargo pants,
as she drapes over him a blue cape that matches
the salon's décor, and spreads it over all but
the blunt toes of his white walking shoes,
he having little hair left with which she can
show off her freshly certified skills, what hair
he has having been combed over brown spots.
He gives over to her his smudged glasses
but not his hearing aids that he takes out
but keeps closed in his fists, the left in his
left hand, the right in the right, so as to be
able to put them back in without any delay
when she's finished. Not his first haircut,
hundreds behind him, a lifetime of trims,
the price always higher this time than the last,
with less and less of his hair on the floor
to be swept away after he's gone. But he is
clearly enjoying, despite the expense, this
young woman's cool fingers fluffing, combing
and snipping on this first day of her work life,
as now and then she stands back, tossing
her curls first to one side, then to the other,
the way the little girl she was only yesterday
might have looked at her snowman, reaching
to touch it then drawing back, swiveling
the chair around so that together they both
face themselves in the mirror, he with no
glasses, youth and age blurred in the balance,
as he approves, and she gives back his glasses,
then sweeps away the cape and shakes it,
this fleeting, once-only experience drifting
away over the tiled floor, as he carefully
puts in his hearing aids, then follows her over

to the desk by the door, where he pays with
a credit card, and writes in a generous tip,
happy to have been her first paying customer,
not for only today, but for forever and ever.

— *Ted Kooser*

**I KNOW WHERE TO FIND
THE GOOD STUFF**

I'm a Whack-a-Mole of aches
and odd symptoms, charleyhorses
and furtive nauseas, and my shelves

are full of witchy remedies:
arnica, senna, the various worts;
turkey tail tincture, birch

bark polypore, lion's mane;
a healing oil from a dead shaman
who chuckles to me from the beyond –

I rub it across my sternum while
thinking of her eyes. I kick it
nineties-style with ibuprofen,

pinch the web of my thumb for luck,
and fill in the blanks with whatever
junk food I find in the cupboard.

— *Laura Cherry*

VISION

On a storm lashed night

A woman left her companions
asleep by the fire and climbed a rock cliff toward a
stone castle. She dreamed

Y*ou must go alone. On foot you must ford*
the roaring river where you may gash your hands
on rocks, as you climb in wind and rain.
You must climb higher toward what you cannot
see past all reason or sense.

Alone she climbed above the clouds and
eagles' cries. Within the castle is the book of many worlds.
Written in fire its words burn

She returned to her companions

— Molly Mattfield Bennett

HOW THE WORLD RIDS ITSELF OF US

Did the saints choose those lives
the flayings, disembowelments,
that spiked wheel, and all those
arrows? There are, as well,
my people's martyrs with flaming
deaths decreed by Inquisition,
and more recently, of course,
involving showers, ovens, cattle cars
a music festival. There is
no end—it takes just one small
hatred and it happens—war, lynching,
"cleansings" for which new words are needed,
My generation was schooled to trust
their flimsy desks for protection
from history's most potent bomb, but
today's first graders can be so much
more easily mowed down and now
available destruction can
put every gathering at risk so why not
my grandson and his officemates
barricading in a bathroom waiting for
the sound of gunshots to end.

— Ellen Steinbaum

EXCERPTS FROM UNDER THE BIG TOP

TURNCOAT LINDSEY GRAHAM FLIPS SCRIPT AFTER TRUMP-ZELENSKY FALLOUT DAILY BEAST, Feb. 28, 2025, 7:14 p.m.

The contortionist can touch his head to his buttocks,
squat and throw his legs over his shoulders,
twist so his head seems on backwards,
squeeze himself into a bell jar. His performance
repulses, but we can't look away. True,
he was born flexible, but he trains hours
each day, stretching and bending
till his spine is loose as a snake's.
He knows, his **skills may not be*
transferable, but it's good work
if you can get it."

SENATOR CASSIDY MD, R-LA VOTES TO ADVANCE RFK Jr. NOMINATION AS HEAD OF DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES Feb. 4, 2025

He used to be a fencer, elegant, swift
but in this circus it's pointless to fight.
If he swallows his sword, he can keep
his job. It hurts less than imagined.
His sword, he discovers, is collapsible
rubber, swallowing causes
only mild indigestion
a doctor can easily treat.

RFK Jr CONFIRMED AS HEAD OF DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES Feb 13, 2025

The magician waves a red handkerchief
over his top hat, pulls out a worm,
a dead bear, a whale's head mounted
on a Volkswagen full of clowns
tumbling prostrate before him.
He makes vials of vaccine
disappear, hurls knives at a doctor
inside a box who emerges unscathed
but for one gushing artery.
Abracadabra the doctor's spine disappears
then gets tossed on a heap
with the others. The magician's bow is deep,

confident. He ran away from his family
to join the circus after all.

AFTER THE PERFORMANCE

The audience boos.
The popcorn is stale
and overpriced. All views
are obstructed. The cotton candy
is laced with pesticide,
the hotdogs rancid.
The elephants ate all the peanuts.
The performers leave without
even a final bow. The children
are crying and hungry. The exit signs
are unlit and all doors blocked.
By the time the crowd fights
their way out--a parking ticket
under the wiper of every car.

— Kathleen Aguero

Quote in contortionist : https://blog.cirquedusoleil.com/what-is-a-contortionist*
Cirque de Soliel blog Oct. 11,2024

PRESIDENT BOB'S LAMENT

Men in suits. Men in boots
(pointy leather shit-kickers with
heels that grind you into bone meal).
Pink-cheeked little porkers in pinstripes who
boss you around, make you small.
Men with money. Men whose word
counts—and all the little brown-nosers
jump to attention, offering their snouts.
Men who hit. Men who hurt you and
think nothing of it. Men who *know.*
My father—shrewd little weasel, but
God, those razor teeth!—he knows
everything and everyone. Got
more secrets than the Sphinx. God
calls him up to trade favors, ask advice.
When I grow up, I'm gonna *be*
one a those sorts of men. There's nothing
in the whole universe I won't be able to do.
Even Momma says so.

— Steven Ratiner

AMERICA IN 2026

After Shelley

A rash, corrupt, depraved, and Want-To-Be King;
Oligarchs like knees on seizing necks, who wolf
Life's blood from what would flow and spring;
Politicians who tout bile, spout bile, and know
Nothing of what weighs their charges down; who cling
To self-regard, while lackeys strike their blow
Against sense, science, and the files stay filed
That would wrest the predators from their prey;
Lame courts and laws that have the lawless wield
A blinded sword against the weak, and slay,
Too, what in the rest could be true faith, sealed
Now inside an idol's crypt, the truth repealed—
All these compose in our fraught time what may
Blot out in no time what should have been day.

— *Daniel Tobin*

AGON

In Memory of Elijah Jovan McClain (1996-2019)

Is *agon* a word or the root of a word?
He was a boy, a very gentle boy
Does *agony* describe physical or spiritual distress?
He never traveled far
Is *agonal breathing* a symptom or a sign?
He never traveled far from home
A symptom of a ketamine overdose?
The greatest thing he'd know
A sign of excited delirium?
Like being in love
The result of the assailant's crazy superior strength?
Like being loved in return
Agonal breathing: a snoring noise, prelude to cardiac arrest?
His final breaths
Will I ever think of love and not remember him?
His last words: *You are beautiful and I love you*

— *Joyce Wilson*

WHAT IS HOME?

- after Mosab Abu Toha's "What is home?"

It's where my brother and I cared for our mother
before she died from liver cancer.

It's where Mom painted in the den every morning
sitting in front of her easel before the pain in her side
became so intense she could no longer hold a brush.

It's where Dad used to watch TV after dinner with Mom
once she finished cleaning the dishes and pots before
she got so sick she couldn't leave the bedroom.

It's where I remember the sound of Mom's laughter
before it was replaced by the nightly sound of her cries
for relief from the pain.

It's where Mom taught me how to cook before she was unable
to make us dinners anymore, the pain making it difficult
to stand by the stove for long.

It's where we returned after the funeral and covered the mirrors
and sat on low stools for a week in mourning.

It's where the minyan gathered each night for the first week
and the sound of prayers filled the emptiness of a house
without Mom.

It's where the memory of pain seeped into my bones,
a permanent reminder of the pain Mom endured and
my inability to save her.

It's where I first met the Angel of Death as he passed over
our house, taking Mom away and leaving us empty handed,
heartbroken, stunned by death's power to steal life from us.

It's a four letter word that no longer exists except in my memory.

— Bruce Black

A DAY

After Li-Young Lee

Today I hike
halls of hours.
Sun on sun,
bottomless blue,
find myself
a cloth cathedral, rest
a shady while.

Why this ache?
Who said I must
exceed myself?

Hills of green
charge ahead.
I plod the slopes,
watch banners
of light stream
toward dusk.

— *Eileen McCluskey*

AND NOW THIS

Already finding it harder
and harder to force yourself
to wake from naps like islands
far away from back pains,

from leg pains, half-blind eyes,
from pills you keep forgetting
to take, and memories
that hurt you with hot sadness,
.
today you awake at dawn
and see your long-dead mother

sitting beside your pillow
until she leans close to you
and whispers that if you shut
your eyes again, you will find—

on the other side of sleep—
a little white rabbit crouched
in the grass, waiting to feel
the touch of your fingers' soft strokes.

— *Robert K. Johnson*

OLD MEN ARE ENTITLED

Old men are entitled to think, I
Think, that we are entitled to sit
Days long in our easy chairs
And think ourselves entitled.
Entitled to hold doors open
For the ladies, entitled to walk
Curbside to shield the damsels
From road splatter as the world
Rushes by. There is deference that
Ought to be shown for longevity
Alone, but also for the luck of not
Yet succumbing to dread of thought
And naught—neglect of self. We are
Entitled to memories—real and imagined.

— *Bruce Morton*

CROSSROADS

a narrow
red brick alley,
stained and damp
leads to a door,

a diner

spirited words
curious whispers
grimaces of distrust
and poetry written
on napkins

another round
of coffee
as the table talk
passes midnight

— *Roger Singer*

NEIGHBORHOOD SUITE

i. Neighbors

Lacking a degree in sanitary engineering,
she has learned her trade nevertheless,
neighbor whose hair I've watched
slowly gray over the years,
her once slender frame thicken.

At first light, she peers into barrels
placed at the curb,
reaches in, sifts, finding
value in what I've discarded,
then pushes her cart, empties rattling,
on to the next station and the next.

Later,
when we pass on the street—
me headed out, she headed home,
me on my side, she on hers—
we smile, nod.

*

ii. Neighborhood Improvement

Jays repair their nest
in the crotch of an old maple—
on the sidewalk below,
an arborist marks the trunk for felling.

A century-old oak once towered
over a demolished house.
Now mounded wood chips
spill into the street,

and in the vacant lot
where a neighbor's house stood,
cornflowers sprout
from sidewalk cracks.

Dump trucks idle, brake, reverse—
their sighs and beeps and alarms
drown out
morning birdsong.

Woodpeckers can't compete

with the rapid-fire rim-taps
of pneumatic nail-guns,
men shingling a new roof.

A visitor unfamiliar with the street
asks the carpenter building new stairs
for directions.
He points with his hammer.

*

iii. Bus Stop

Armenian nanna at the bus stop,
widow-black: wool sweater, skirt—
slip hem showing—
knit stockings bunched at ankles,
scuffed slippers down at heel…
nods,
sucks her dentures,
makes room on the bench.

— *Mark Pawlak*

THE TREES ARE WAKING UP THE WORLD

They call us
as they magnolia,

beseeching us,
they beech and maple.

It is time, they say
to open, to April.

Watch us, they chorus,
branch and unfold.

Petal.

— *Deborah Leipziger*

How they come now

Most of my life, memory
was a room I entered
by choice. Sometimes
something triggered it.

Now memory is like
weather. Out of my
control. It happens when
ever it wants to.

It's a force that doesn't
seem to come from
within, as if it bears down
and just takes over.

Perhaps because of so
much of living is behind
me, like a little peacock
dragging a huge tail.

Some are interesting to
recall; some embarrass-
Ing, some bring me back
to misery, terror, loss.

They may be more vivid
than the actual room:
events that created
me, brought me here

to old age and this
narrowed life into
which they burst like
blinding fireworks.

— *Marge Piercy*

SUNDAY, AGAIN

How nearly.
In the puddle of
things, people, choices
that involve splitting
of hair & heart, not much
could have swayed.
My trouser hems are
sewage-splattered by
each morning's commute.
My sleeves all turn grey.
Perhaps there is reason
for this: I laid in
the hammock too long
that day in May, took
a wrong turn in my moral
education, upset
the sky with irreverent
complaints. As a child,
I sat one summer inside
a spinning pink teacup &
believed I could never
get to the age I am now.
One long blink & I landed
here anyways, got old & still
I know no weapon
sharper than my own
mother's voice. I do not
need to wonder.
I made it out for two
years & tumbled right
back into her unmapped
home, palms slicked
to the ground, slipped right
back into my childhood
bedroom. I recognize
so little.
My question is not one
regarding love, but whatever
it is that follows.
How close did I get
to touching it—no,
I need no touch—
I know already how
near, how nearly there.

— *Xiadi Zhai*

GRANDMA

I was born out of sin and a loveless union.
They hated each other so much they would hold knives
in their black hands aligning finally when he sees
the milky high yellow breast release itself from the muumuu
She boils a pot of I fucking forgot
And he sits in the bad boy chair
She makes him burnt eggs
And he eats them with his hands.
She hangs babies clothes on the line
And that way it smells like sky and earth and borax.
She thunderously picks leaves in the yard
Ignored salvaging famished pit pulls
Chained for life to a fence
And then she sits on the porch
Waiting for the honkey mailman
She sighs. She always waits for a letter
From me a trillion miles away
And she holds the blue gray airmail letter
And smiles and tucks it in the underneath
Of her heavy chocolate breast

Nobody knows She was never taught
To read so the pretending takes effort
My cursive made it worse.
Before she died I did phonetics
and tried to help her read
And she slapped me on the ass
With a fly seat and told me
To mind my business.

— *Julia Kanno*

TO THE TEEN GIRLS, TO MAKE MUCH OF TIME

- With no apology to Robert Herrick

If urged to snip, bind, and cradle
an armful of red roses—or brandish a clutch
of lipstick tubes—should your beauty
at fifteen prove insufficient to snare true love,

pause to consider. Yes, the squat pink clock
your mother gave you on your thirteenth birthday
is ticking. But think: who hangs the deadlines
on the timeline? Certainly not your womb,

warrantied to work for thirty years. Not
some fuzz-cheeked boy with dark lashes
who'll turn to face the wall the moment
you reach to smooth his tangled hair.

It's you: you get to choose! Don't believe
the lie: these years of zits and cramps and fear
of never being chosen are not life's finest.
Forget the sparkly princess crap. Instead,

imagine delivering a calf, flying a jet,
replenishing the world's honeybee supply.
Don't be coy. Use your time to reach beyond
the moment; make your prime lasting.

— Patricia L. Hamilton

LIFE OUTSIDE OF HOLLYWOOD

Exploding stars bespeak the universe—
all is change which is not optimal.
No compass fixes the location of your mind
nor finds your heart
while visual estimations are at best inexact, indeed
at times purposefully in error.

You met me half-way but not nearly close enough
for me to understand.
Assumptions of parity are irrelevant as
ofttimes there is a winner and a loser; more often
two losers.

We met in the interstices of need
explored our overlaps
finding we covered parts of the other
in blankets of darkness.

I do not wholly blame you
but I blame you more than I blame me.

In the movies you always have Paris
or Rome, definitely Rome
and you never have to say you're sorry, but
outside tinsel town
there always are blood stains where the skid-marks end
.
— *Stephen M. Honig*

THE TRAIN

My love and I walked slow as pudding by the Fitchburg line—as fine a day

as we could find, the calmest sky (though we were far from seeing eye-to-eye).

A train shot past, its echoes strong as thunder through the grass.

And then we saw a flash (we thought we did) and heard unearthly screams

(we weren't sure—our senses raw, the distance too extreme).

Did this truly happen? Did we imagine? Does it matter what it's called?

We come from mud—warm-blooded—naked shadows all.

My love and I go walking (palm-to-palm these days) beneath fierce rain.

It frightened us—the train.

— *Varsha Kukafka*

MY WIFE ON A HORSE IN A THEME PARK AT DA LAT

The horse is as fake
as the cowboy hat she's wearing,
but what a cowgirl shines through,

my wife's joy must be spreading
across the whole of Vietnam, families

along the Mekong feeling
the giddy-up she's commanding.
A historian claims the West

was never the West—tell that to my wife
who's galloping over the prairies,

stopping at a ghost town of imagination
before she gets off the horse, unaided,
striding away into the oncoming sunset.

— *Tim Suermondt*

REMEMBER ME

The singer sang “Dante’s Prayer” by Loreena McKennitt:
“When the dark night seems endless,
please remember me.”

The song was an arrow into my heart.
I imagined my future dark night,
alone, having lost my wife, my love,
and all I could hold were memories.

The tears came.
I cried now as I knew I would then,
out of the pain in the dark.

But then I remembered,
looked to my right—
at you, sitting beside me,
still alive and with me.

And though it was night,
the sun rose.

— *Keith Tornheim*

TENDER PAGES

Poking through scrambled shelves
unsure what to keep or toss so many
paperbacks with dried yellow

words crumbling in my hands
tender pages shivering as they fall apart
on their way to book death

one fading cookbook
advises Taurus Aquarius and
other sun-circling souls that

we spin 940 million kilometers
annually so need fine-tuned dietary
advice for cosmic well-being

maybe found in a used-book bin
reminder that when young I’d listen
to almost anyone claim almost anything.

— *Nina Rubinstein Alonso*

FRIAR IN THE WOOD

The darkness was unusually dark,
the night more night than night had ever been.
“That’s my two cents,” the friar told the dark,
then held his breath, alert to what he’d seen
or had not seen, who knows, just now, just there
where nothing visible had stirred the wood.
He gave his eyes the license eyes require
to see what is or isn’t: There she stood,
full-bodied, wraithlike, both such realms combined,
a vision worthy of a poet’s gasp,
which rose attended by a sneezing fit
and several expulsions of foul gas.
“Praise Christ you are precisely my desire,”
he said to flesh or spirit, couldn’t tell.
But it was Lenten season, he a friar
who’d never neared a tryst like this before,
and must by faithful rite recuse himself
from contemplating what it was he felt.
Praise Christ indeed!—the poet in his soul
shook both fists in his friar’s face declaring
this instant of ethereal revelation
with carnal overtones: A Blessed Boon!
“Christ yes,” he said, “that’s insight I must carry
as if it were a second, lighter cross.”
A dimpled grin spruced up his dour mien
as he shouldered both crosses
and hailed fellow pilgrims with love songs
caged in the Latin that made all things holy.
The elixir of faith had slaked his scruples.
His Lenten trek drew lovers in his wake.

— Tomas O’Leary

THE SUN GODDESS HAS A SNIT

In a Shinto myth, the gods throw a loud party
to draw the Sun Goddess out of a cave where she is
hiding, depriving the world of light and warmth, and
when she emerges, block the cave with a stone.

She was just pouting anyway, burned up
over humans sucking in her radiance for tanning.

“My Light births worlds!” she exclaimed. “How dare
they use it in such a petty, ill-mannered way!”

As she became increasingly incensed, the gods
could see her edging toward the cave.

(She retreated there, like a diva refusing to sing,
any time she felt disrespected.) But they

were too slow to stop her and suddenly
the Light died. Humans panicked, but the gods

just shook their heads knowingly and brought
out the wine. The Sun Goddess could never

resist a sweet white wine, grown, as all wine was,
under her ripening warmth. Once goblets

were raised, lutes played, and singing began,
she forgot her mood and, always the party girl,

emerged from hiding. And while she partied,
the other gods, tired of her diva act, rolled

a giant stone across the cave mouth, ensuring
they wouldn’t have to play that game again.

— *Lawrence Kessenich*

I TROWEL AND TEND

the dark earth

unbed the worms
who twist wet and awake

these friends of my garden
(shall I halve them

multiply w/ violence?

summon their powers
of regeneration?)

pure taste bud
they tunnel the dirt

purple vulvic sensorians
eating and excreting

they have the potential
said Darwin
to Change Everything

&

darkearth worm
your life in the beak
in the belly
of the robin
is a kind of life
everlasting

— *Mary Buchinger*

WOBBLY SABI

He mends the porcelain bowl, gold sheen
in the wayward crack; precious
metal picking out how it fell apart,
a map of weakness recovered,
honoring the journey.
Not hiding flaws,
Japanese find solace, honor
in piecing together again – *wabi sabi* –
beautiful imperfection.

The precious metal in my hip joints
is only visible on grainy, black and white images
or under TSA scrutiny, the wand
picking up the music of titanium.
But I feel the mend every day.
I am not hiding my flaws –
I have my own wobbly sabi.

— *Catherine McGuire*

READER

This morning I was drowsing late
when the commotion
started I jumped up to the window
Three crows velvet-black
perched in the mulberry
cawing at something
in the spruce then sailed
in circles plunging high
and low I looked and
looked could find no owl no
hawk *whatever was there*
must have fled
but I watched those crows linger
circling calling
a long while
as I worked on this and that
thinking about poetry
and teaching and the meaning
of any of it as well as the animals
outside the strangeness of us
humans and why do I want
to put us in words who is the Reader
I answer to the one who won't
be fooled and what is this loneliness
contentment and doubt and then
I went to stand in an upstairs
window tightening the latch
against the draft and
there from that angle
I saw the owl very still
on a low branch among the
branchings which rose and fell
lightly in the wind the shadows
shifting across the patterns
of its back and it turned
to eye me with its strange
eyes no stranger
than my own

— *Hilary Sallick*

BALLERINA HAIBUN

Her mom was worn by crippling childhood polio and five pregnancies, delivering four half-brothers in a second-floor apartment. Laurette, the older sister, never met her dad—a U.S. army casualty of friendly fire. Her stepdad ruled the house.

hum twirl leap land
nightgown puffed in attic air
melting icicles

Coin-by-coin, her mom built a stash she hid beneath a kitchen-corner floorboard for Laurette's ballet lessons every other week from dear Madame.

heels touch toes spread wide
stand tall in first position
á demi plié

Laurette's mom marveled at every ballet skill Laurette mastered. Those days, her stepdad delivered Keebler crackers in a company truck for steady pay, but downed six-packs, using the grocery money. He didn't know a cabriole from doll's play.

surface of a pond
ripples from tossed pebbles
paper sailboat tips

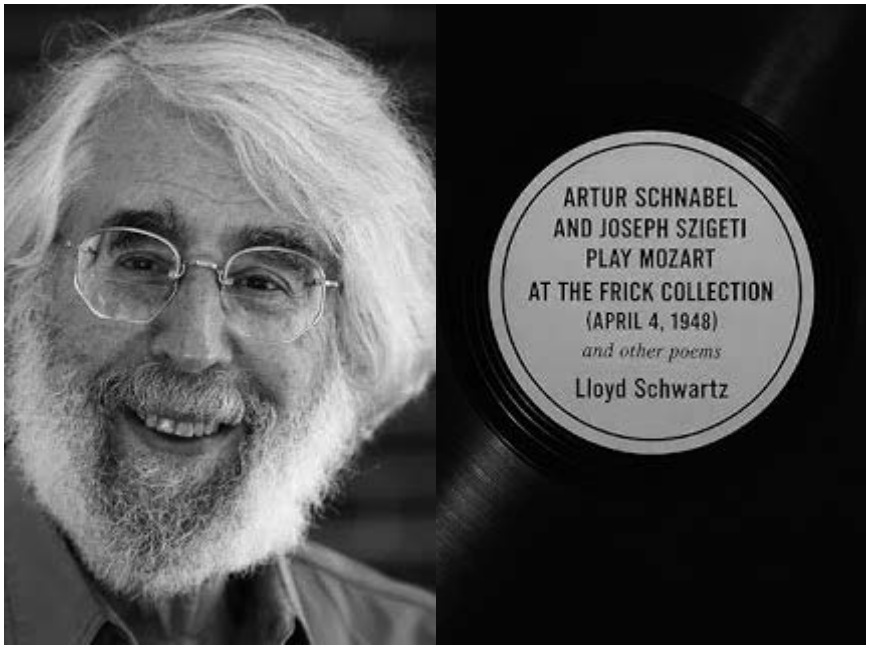
Unlike her brothers, Laurette was spared burns, bruises, and her stepdad's strap. But at thirteen, dressed in leotard and tights, her practice leaps, twirls, and arabesques in the family room revealed her ballerina shape—her mom no longer climbed the stairs to her attic room.

his wings raised neck bent
crisscrossing twigs cattails sedge
mute she won't nestle

Laurette's mom helped her conceal her swelling belly for school, while her stepdad still startled her awake at night until she slipped down the bare-wood stairs to her mom and out onto the fire-escape, her stepdad trailing--off balance, tripping, swearing, waking the boys. She clutched her mom's note: "Madame, Please hide Laurette."

puffed piping plover
shelters in her shell-rimmed nest
storm-crashed waves first peep

— Paulette Demers Turco



INTERVIEW WITH LLOYD SCHWARTZ
Interviewer: Doug Holder

I had the pleasure of interviewing Lloyd Schwartz about his latest book of poetry: *Artur Schnable and Joseph Szigeti Play Mozart at the Frick Collection (April 4, 1948 and other poems*. Schwartz's work is full of musicality and delicately gets the marrow of life.

From the Citation for the 2025 David Ferry and Ellen LaForge Annual Poetry Prize:
"A simultaneous delicacy and ferocity of introspection, interiority, and inhabiting of minds that is intoxicating.... lyrics that spiral into haunting snapshots of fractured lives..."

*

DH You have written that you hope people will call your new poetry collection your best book.

LS I think this is an odd but interesting and (I hope) entertaining and moving book about living in the world and how to respond to it. I love to overhear conversations and listen to people talking. I think plain speech can be as beautiful and moving as a more poetic diction. There's a poem in this book that's about what people were saying immediately after 9/11 and another poem about things I just happened to overhear that seemed hilarious or oracular. There's a section of quiet, intimate, personal poems based on Vermeer, or visiting a poet I loved (you have a poem in that same series), and it ends with a section of poems about making art--paintings, movies, music--and what that might mean to us, and questions how important that is to us. Art--engaging with it or making it--has been a central part of my life, has probably kept me alive. I think the poems in this book come closer to dealing with that question than the poems in any of my previous books.

DH You dedicate your first poem to Attila József, the late great Hungarian poet. How does he speak to you? He was known as the 'proletarian' poet. You have a working-class background.

LS The poem is really a loose translation not an actual dedication. But you're absolutely right, He came from the working-class and lived a short painful life. But this marvelous poem spoke to me more because it reflected the way an artist responds to a terrifying world situation, as artists do now. Maybe the best we can do is write an elegy for a world we knew and loved, a world that seems no longer possible.

DH The title of your book refers to a famous concert at the Frick Museum in New York when Artur Schnabel and Joseph Szigeti played Mozart. They were very different in sensibility—but they gelled together at this event. Could you do this with a poet vastly different than yourself?

LS Wow--I hope so! The poets I've been close to--Robert Lowell and Elizabeth Bishop from an earlier generation--Frank Bidart, Gail Mazur, Robert Pinsky from my own generation--Jill McDonough, Tara Skurtu, Andrea Cohen from a younger generation--seem very different from me. I could never write their poems. Yet I love their work and love reading together with them, and have even read their poems at readings, workshops, and discussions. How dull the arts would be if everyone worked in the same style. That's one of the ideas behind the Schnabel/Szigeti poem. It's one of the things that drives me crazy when I open a magazine and read poems that all sound like they were written for the same workshop.

DH I noticed you have translated Victor Neborak's poem " Fish" Compare this to Elizabeth Bishop's poem of the same name. He seems more political than Bishop was.

LS Bishop could be very political, but in a slyer, less overt way. For decades, "The Fish" was her most famous and popular poem. Now it's "One Art." Neither is overtly political. But all three have to do with suffering. In "The Fish," Bishop lets the fish go when she identifies with its suffering. Could we read that as a political statement?

DH As you are a Pulitzer Prize winning music critic-- I am not surprised that you dedicated a poem to Paul Verlaine. Many composers put his work to music. Has your own work been put to music? Sometimes when I hear you read your poems-- I am thinking they could be songs.

LS Thank you! I knew that Verlaine poem because it's one of Debussy's greatest song-settings. Yes--a bunch of my poems have been set to music by composers I admire. It's so fascinating to hear how someone from a different artistic world responds to any of my poems. I once wrote a poem that I had hoped the wonderful composer John Harbison would use in the party scene of his opera The Great Gatsby. I heard it as a madcap 1920s fox trot. He set it as a sultry beguine. But he didn't use it in his opera.

Here is a poem from Schwartz's new collection:

OFFICER AND LAUGHING GIRL

"Who is this man? I can barely
make out his face in the window-glare.

A fierce silhouette. The glowing edge
of his floppy, broad-brimmed hat—
the Devil with a halo! His
red jacket on fire. An assault
of maleness; a mystery . . .

Does he see my terror?

—Or is he staring at the map
on the wall behind me? Or out the
open window? His impatient hand
on his hip, even sitting down.
What does he keep staring at? What
makes him stay?"

"Why doesn't she just drink her wine
and relax? She looks like she's
about to cry. I can see the tears
welling up. But no—her eye
is clear. Her hands on the table,
around her glass, palms up—ready to take
Whatever is given . . .

What do I have to give?

—I could travel past the edge
of the known world, and never find
a pearl worthy of this smile
that sees right through me,
sees my darkness—
yet doesn't cease to smile."

IMPRESSIONS THROUGH AN APRIL MIST

This season of change with the cold, the clouds
overlay high over the trees. An expected

awaited warmth will cover this lowly world,
now in a chilly mist. A remnant of night

lingers in the day's low light. Those on foot
passing by may see yellow daffodils in pots

on sills. On a quiet street the puddles reflect
the filmy deep of the sky and the nearly bare

arching branches of oak bringing out a faint
yet welcome sound – a bird at a sidewalk overhung

by a glazed magnolia calls where I come along this route
to the sweet chirping – calling in to me

to wish to linger. To think, fly me out
little bird from this small pedestrian self.

— *Reizel Polak*

MY OWN PRIVATE AFTERLI FE

and this is the secret that silent Lazarus would not reveal:
that everyone is right, as it turns out. you go to the place
you always thought you would go
— Billy Collins, "The Afterlife"

My afterlife will be largely outside. Walking through
a meadow full of wildflowers, like mid-summer Vermont,
or crunching fallen leaves and spicy pine needles,
the play of light and shadow in old forest. A beach.
An ocean beach, with tides, to jump into the waves,
and a lake by mountains, like the timeshare outside Quebec.
Heaven could be Canadian. There will be dogs.
My dogs, any friendly dogs. Cute ones, huge ones,
like the Leonburgers that loped along the trails
at the conservation area in Amherst. There will be deer
that like to play so no one chases them. No one hunts.
Birdsong, spring peepers, lightening bugs.
Snow falling in that hush that's somehow symphonic
and smells like citrus. Places to nap.
The music you grew up with streaming mid-day;
classical for every sunrise and sunset,
the conductor from the Phantom Tollbooth.
Acres of bookcases. I don't see any people
but they must be around somewhere.
Reassuring but not demanding anything.
Eventually—but not for many many years—
my daughter will appear periodically
giving me updates from her parallel universe.
All those simultaneous contiguous spheres
and no friction. If there is eternal energy
assembled in an astral plane, this is my order.
There are no deadlines after death.
No diet restrictions. No rude people, no disrespect,
no grinding inequality, no bills, no collections.
No pain. No fear. Everyone is welcome here.

— *Elizabeth S. Wolf*

THE SEVENTH WONDER

From its mythic *Heroic Age,* gelatin-silver photographs display explorers' ships
locked in frozen waves, pancake ice afloat like lotus leaves, jagged
landscapes black and gray and white and white and white.

Such a surprise, these colors brushed on monochrome—
violets, algae red, verdigris, pewter, bronze—
some nights glow with tangerine light.

Turquoise blue mountains
Turquoise green water
Cobalt blue skies.

Cast-of-thousands penguin colonies—birds so highly evolved they're metrosexual -
Emperors and Adélies—full of dapper charm and excrement—pink drippings
on their rookeries, guano so thick it's visible from space.

Weddell seals dive down half a mile, linger an hour, return, on one breath.
But how to find out how? Microprocessors, made pressure-proof
and portable? *Is it hard to put a backpack on a seal?*

Here in *the Heart of the Great Alone,* icebreaker cruise ships cut paths
all austral summer. How many tourists, taking photographs,
can balance on a sheet of melting ice?

— Denise Provost

CITY LIGHTS

City lights outshine the stars,
they seem too far to wish upon.
Whereas here, all feels too close,
compressed by things man-made:
a wall, a fence, tall barriers built
to trick the eye into believing one
is utterly alone, and maybe one is,
in this thicket of things.

City sounds, relentless, arrest the ear.
They do not ebb and flow like tide or wind,
but keep their volume turned up high,
through the night beneath the starless skies.
A hubbub of car horns, sirens, radios,
curses from the teeming populace
that fights to find a little piece
of contentment in a concert of resentment.

City smells float all around,
heady mixtures of fumes and elixirs,
wafting in and out of every door,
concentrating in dark alleys
where fresh breezes rarely dare to show their faces.
A melting pot of scents and stinks
ravishes with odors—unimaginable!
but relished by discerning city noses.

— *Vera Kochanowsky*

THE WIZARD

One devious morning the wizard woke,
Grabbed his astrolabe, surveyed his tower,
Outside the earth shook, a thundershower
For all to bear, even absented folk.

It was he who raised up the winds, the gale,
Who rent the thickened clouds, who soaked the earth,
Who pried from daemon his power's worth,
A fate certain. But that's another tale.

His books of wisdom scattered through the room
With paper drawings and occult symbols,
With crackling circles and magic crystals,
And gold calves, bejeweled, encased in gloom.

Piles of maps, of atlases lay about
The desk of this gray-haired sage; he sat down,
Giddy with musing, a halo, a crown
Of sunspots, before another flameout.

Where to go today? To Marakanda,
There Alexander's army turns to dust,
Or walled Troy, where Helen proves the cruelest
Prize. But then, as now, beauty's exemplar.

Or Paris as Rollo begins his siege?
He'll witness this in ancient present tense.
Wars of history are, of course, nonsense,
But knowledge commands the field, builds prestige.

A carpet allows his transportation
To the global theater, word after word
Tumbling forward from each corner. "My Lord
Raise them," the wizard said, "let this be done."

And it is done in his eyes' next twinkling.
All players know their iniquitous lines
Of fortune and fame and conscious designs.
Apparitions become life, he's thinking.

He mimics the past by his creations,
At least it starts that way. The thread leads here,
To Babur's gardens in the open air,
Where poets gather in ad hoc nations.

They breathe to light the clay of syllables.
The tears of passion, unrequited love
Loses its warmth, despairs, drops an octave.
In midair they reshape invisibles.

Mind sets geography, the wizard learns.
His fancies found out, then saturated.
The pleasures of life leave him frustrated.
Weakness overlays. A darkness governs.

Following the path of goodness and light,
Not justice, which needs avoidance. It's crass
And fuels the vengeful mob. We all trespass.
Good angels visited. He was forthright.

Once more he conjured up a troubled sleep.
Witchcraft or not, skulking shadows he met.
They tore and they thrashed at bloody sunset—
Wizard, Oh wizard, in heaven's dustheap.

— *Dennis Daly*

ASTONISHED

My wife and I climb the wooded trail
adjoining McLean's hospital
(retreat of Robert Lowell and other
Boston poets), wondering if mental
patients find solace here.

We reach the upper border
and Pine Alley, a level, long
corridor of tall pines,
but this time choose the path
down from woods along
a high-grassed, rolling meadow,
its acres treeless, except for
one gnarled oak in the center.

The path is worn, but empty now;
drops between meadow
and woods, then at bottom,
curves left, and reaches a junction,
where a sign warns bikers
to dismount, since each direction
is blind to other until too late.

Did I mention this is fall? Leaves
varicolored? Blustery winds,
sky overcast and threatening rain?

My wife prefers to lag behind,
troubled by sore knees and feet.
Instead of longer path around,
I point to wooded entrance,
plunge ahead and step,
careful to keep balance
over a boulder's face,
foliage thick, and new incline;
My wife calls *don't slip,*
careful, as she follows.

From other visits, I remember
the exit into open light, how
the split path merges and climbs
to a plateau where more paths meet.

But never like this. As I emerge,
full sun comes out, igniting leaves,
which seethe and shake, while

the distant forest's tree-line
tosses from ghostly, traveling eddies,
like a player piano's keys.

"Hurry. Come see!" I shout behind,
but she's too late. Sun dies,
winds fade, light rain begins.

—*DeWitt Henry*

AS NOTHING GOES

To write a poem you start with nothing
this you've been told

Nothing as air entered lungs

Per Frost *poetry is emotions finding thoughts*
thoughts finding words it goes

that when words can't locate thoughts
thoughts can't locate emotions

there's a failure of a sort—
What will you do then

Just now a holiday brochure promises

the pool party
the karaoke
the spas
the colossal shrimps
the cocktails
and the comedian makes people laugh
so hard some start crying

that surely is not nothing

— *Pui Ying Wong*

STALKED BY AN ORB YOU BARELY KNOW

Your future stalker goes unannounced.
It lenses in—fisheye wide—
through a convex mirror found
at the thrift store where
you once recognized your own mouth
on the face of a mannequin.

He isn't a blaring alarm
but a blur in the security cam,
all a halo and heat signature,
a haunting in a bokeh:
a circle of light never quite focused
that always remains.

Austin, Nashville, Tempe,
he will again appear
in your artful photographed
round stones set on sidewalks,
in front of chalked outlines of moons
drawn by children you never met.

And how you worried, how you prayed,
even flipping a coin for an answer, but
he was not the coin-toss moment,
rather, the coin, spinning in air.
The vinyl that continues to turn
as the needle scrapes the label.

He's just nothing.
Someone who once almost loved you.
Whom a parapsychologist had no right to know.
He is a soft filter you mistook for warmth
but is actually just dust
annoying you

by leaving the scent
of your favorite perfume
found inside the hood
of your comfortable old sweatshirt,
cigarette burns shaped like planets fondly
reminisced, though the smell of smoke was gone.

This new orb
was the date with flint in his kiss,
not a chatting up rando at the bar tonight
who wanted your body more than your name.

No, this one is dead like a broken snow globe.
One you cannot shake, even to revive it.

"A carnival ride you cannot get off,"
you'll write later, loving the thrill with
scraped knees circling pressed against,
unyielding metal. No one stopping the spin.
This ghost you thought you never wanted
in this moment will be strangely missed:

like a broken plate you always used,
a wine ring left on the book cover,
the fierce-shaped bruise left by
a seatbelt you didn't expect to save you.
You'll feel him: a soft blink
in your peripheral, wanting him

in the moon seen from the porch table,
glowing and rising slowly.
You'll say, "He is a circle
that always would find me."
And you'll mean it like praise.
Like closure.
— *Timothy Gager*

THE INITIATE

Rattling the frost-etched windowpanes, dark trees
sway against the darker hills. Before
the youngest child, the sun's beneath its cover.
I listen hard for something in the wind;
I catch myself imagining a measure
orchestrates its rise and fall, to make of
silence an interval, and not an end.

We shared a language, we two. I, who said
so little, hung on every word she spoke,
mouthing the sound of it, tasting its sense.
As when the lilac flowers in the spring
and children suck the petals for their sweetness,
a fleeting taste of nectar paints the memory,
however soon the withered clusters rust.

— *Alfred Nicol*

SONG OF THE PURE OF HEART

None shriller
than Stephen Miller

blaming the victims to justify the killing
of Renee and Alex by instantly calling
them *violent, criminal, domestic terrorist*,
not Americans standing up in protest

None more certain
than driven Stephen

that evil, all evil, is the *other*,
the strange, the different, merely odd – *them*.
Near – a neighbor maybe – but ever over *there*,
implacable enemy to smother.

None more driven
than certain Stephen

from behind the curtain inciting
others – with masks and guns – sweeping
up thousands, beating, detaining, arresting
them, some screaming, some weeping.

None chillier
than steely Miller

from behind that curtain directing
further others show their faces declaiming
bare-faced lies so nasty. so outrageous ,
they stand shameless, and ridiculous.

No one wilier,
or holier, than Miller

you'd think, whatever the public blowback,
for agents and flacks, he'd have their backs.
But, no, others' faults are not at all
his; they erred: they broke official protocol.

— *Llyn Clague*

BEHIND THE DOOR

When time and space bend and expand,
Portals of possibility are perceptible
Between realms of myth and what
We perceive as tangible reality.
We glide on a bridge frozen in mists
From an epoch of stolen apples,
Purloined from the Tree of Morality
And the golden fruit of The Hesperides,

We stir on the edge of nightmare,
Confronting us with a world in which
The sword of judgment hovers,
Menacing, swaying by a thread.
There is the sensation of the Earth
Heaving beneath the harsh hooves
Of the dreaded Horsemen.

Will dis-ease continue to spread
A malignant miasma, or will we, instead,
Unbury the storied box wherein only
Multi-hued hope remains?
We have an option: To continue
To sleep-walk in our mutually tethered
Twilight dream or arise to rediscover
Our unique Oneness, and yet, and yet,
Still you ponder what will you find
When you unbar the fabled door?

— Harris Gardner

THE GULF BETWEEN

Across the river in the fog, someone is walking,
a phantom blip in pale gray air.
A man? A woman? —walking
a park service walkway, a pleasure path
in cold, foggy deepening dusk
        where there are no streetlights
and the walk leads nowhere
there aren't shorter ways to go.

Across the river a quarter mile from my window
clock-like and unhurried the figure walks,
a shadow in a film noir—
The hunter or the hunted?
A disconsolate lover, forlorn in the fog?
A depressive seeking oblivion, disappearing in the fog?
A lottery winner happily ignoring the fog?

The dot-sized cranium is sealed and off limits,
but the body it controls keeps moving,
a stubborn alternative to apparent reason
until it vanishes into the blanketing fog.

— *Jaquelyn Malone*

DICKINSON MUSEUM COFFEE MUG

with a watercolor by Lana Fiala

If I were standing in the covered entrance
of the granite church facing Main Street –
had my parents not left Amherst –
and I prepared to wheel my mother down
the twenty-first-century entrance ramp,

waiting on the porch of First Congregational,
the house of worship funded by Emily's brother
and father, which she heartily ignored,
where I grew up as much as in the classroom,
though I'm no more saved than she –

then, having brought my mother to my father
and their car, if I ambled one block past
the memorial garden leavened by their ashes
(in fact, not in imagination) –

I'd see across the street the buildings
painted with loose-lined cheer
on this mug, a whimsy. The Evergreens,
where Austin "crossed the Rubicon"
with Mabel. A dog's brown silhouette –
that must be Carlo – facing the Homestead,

Emily Dickinson's, famous and unknown
in my adolescence, its few barren rooms near-
inaccessible in the years we sent helium balloons
up from the church lawn after Easter service.
We released sacs of latex that fell from sky
back into earth, a rapture that I feel sure
would not have snagged her faith.

Dickinson of the mystifying white dress –
Poet corseted by commas, who thought
feathers hopeful and frogs public,
according to the scraps that we were taught –
Emily of a shut historic house, pride
of our town and magnet for clichés.
I was a child of not-her-church. She became
Broadway's *Belle of Amherst*, with a perky
index finger, book balanced on her head.

— David P. Miller

WE HAVE A FACEBOOK GROUP NOW

Summer camp. The girls, and the boys. Blue Sky.
Lenape. We had a fire-swallowing chief named Thunderpony.
We had Sunday Quaker services on the lake, where we all headed out
in rowboats and canoes and sat still in the ripples until
someone so-moved would begin to speak. But we were young
eleven, twelve, teens, and what words did we have then to say?
Complain that someone had started a fight on Wednesday?
Our dog ran away? My grandmother had died?
That I was once more picked last for softball?
Feelings I was unable to express.
So, usually it would be a counselor, who'd speak up,
or one of the directors, who of a gentle sudden,
would stand in his boat and direct us to listen
to the breeze. The birds singing from the trees.
And maybe a story would come up. Some moral
I'd never grasped then, or no longer remember.
But sitting still. Quieting my mind.
That was the strongest lesson I gleaned those mornings.
And then, more quiet. More clanking of shackles
against each other. A paddle feathering
a re-pointing, a straightening of a path. Small waves
lapping up to hulls. Oars knocking gunwales.
A sniffle. A cough. Until, nothing more to say,
we knew it was time to disperse.

Summer camp, where I learned by heart, the words
to "As Tears Go By." That melodic Stones' song
of, I thought, simple lyrics. Ones that stick with me
to this day. A song that ripples against a boat.
A song with sadness I wouldn't understand
at twelve, but as I page through Facebook,
I see the innocence, the children at play,
and, as I age into the evening of the day,
what might or might not be lost forever.

— *Carla Schwartz*

YOU ARE MY SUNSHINE, MY ONLY SUNSHINE

- *After Billy Collins*

You are the rack line, the flotsam and jetsam
carried by waves dumped at high tide,

You are food for scavengers
and shelter from drying wind and predators.

You may even be the yellow blossoms of seaside goldenrod
attracting monarchs on their trip out of winter.

In addition you could be the tuna fish on seeded rye
and the glass of warm merlot.

However you are not at all the wind beneath my wings,
nor are you the sanderlings and sandpipers
darting back and forth at the water's edge.

And common sense should tell you
you are not the harmless moon-disc jellyfish
nor the stinging sea nettles.

But you may be assured,
I am the soothing sound of waves
slapping on the shore
and the regal whale skiing in the shadows.

I am also the picnic basket on the sand
plump with cookies and watermelon slices.
And if you're lucky, a bottle of rye whiskey.

But you are still my sunshine, my only sunshine.
You will always be my sunshine,
not to mention my moonshine,
my shoeshine, my byline, my deadline.

My azure sky, my stars and maybe even
my castles crumbling like silly words
beneath lumpy clouds.

— *Liz Dolan*

APOLOGY TO A STREET WHOSE NAME I HAVE FORGOTTEN

Many times, while my mind was centered on the past,
or on what was to come next,
You took me forward towards work,
You were around the corner from my one room apartment,
And you always were there to show me the seasons,
Bare winter branches,
And trash cans
Wearing the hats of smooth, cool whiteness
Above the slush on sidewalks.

I walked down you to get away,
summer nights, trying to get out of my skin,
In an attempt to return fresh,
Hoping that I could somehow fix the murky things inside.

I lost my wallet that you did not give back to me.

You were full of wonderful and horrible smells
Emerging through open windows, the greasy steam of little restaurants,
Exhaust, combined with clove cigarettes,
A whiff of strong cologne, or pee against a wall,
You had an entire artist's pallet of fragrances,
First thick, then fading with each step.

For a dog, this must have been a wonderland!
On a leash, nose down and pulling with all his strength,
Taking note of the histories layered upon a tree,
After winning the tug of war with the leash-holder,
Adding its own offering onto the heap.

I looked, while others looked,
At topsy-turvy neon crowds filling the sidewalks,
And I gazed at all of your shop and restaurant windows
The shine of people and things, wondering,
Can a mystery be revealed
In only a glimpse?

A dropped glove is not losing yourself,
An unfulfilled desire is not a thing,
Reflections cannot ever be held.
I questioned these,
Navigating around someone trying to tie their shoe.
Even when, existing with everything,
Alone.

You were my avenue, for constantly reminding me to take notice
Of those who were living one more day,
In soiled clothing, cradling a bottle or a smoke, on the pavement,
While you showed me hints of a life I would never achieve,
Of the rich enjoying themselves,
In a trendy playground of their own steeped-in experiences.

You let me stand with you, looking up at the
Skeleton fire escapes hovering there, on a baby blue sky,
Feeling a strange shiver of relief,
For not to having either too little or too much,
A voyeur who walks, who breathes, in your past,
And one day leaves.

Sorry that I forgot your name.

—Anna Holstedt

LEFT WRITING

~for Helen Vendler

Self-reflexive poems springboarding off their titles
often belie their pop and bellyflop. Especially one
headed with a negative connotation like *Left*

as though I were abandoned here
in the cliché of the sullen sedentary schoolkid,
head tilted on knuckles, at a thick tome by a window

through which fellows can be seen playing
soccer in a field… It makes the phrase
left writing picture-perfect enough you almost miss

the facile pun—*Left Righting*—the homophonic
polarization with its friction to titillate humdrum
erudition with the event of an eye's flicker

as if setting *left* and *right* in synch were that unthinkable,
as if one simply walking could proceed otherwise.
Left right, left right, mom used to say

setting me on my feet from a fall.
Persist. Keep going, is what she meant.
The title *Left Writing* whispers an affirmation

the reader of the mid 2020s
with our sharpened tooth for politics
might resign to erasure, were we not

to comment insightfully on poems any longer,
as though one's feet could venture the continuous body
that forking the tongue bewilders us with daily.

— Michael Todd Steffen

WRITERS' BIOS—SPRING, 2026

Kathleen Aguero's most recent book of poetry is *World Happiness Index* (Tiger Bark Press). She has published five other volumes of poetry and co-edited three anthologies of multi-cultural literature for the University of Georgia Press. Currently she serves as Faculty-at-Large in Poetry for the Solstice Low-Residency Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing at Lasell University. She is the recipient of a 2026 Creative Individual Grant from the Massachusetts Cultural Council.

Nina Rubinstein Alonso's work appeared in *The New Yorker, Ploughshares, Bluepepper, Writing in a Woman's Voice*, etc. *This Body* was published by Godine Press, *Distractions En Route* and *The Ones I Could Tell Anything* by Ibbetson Street Press, *Travels With Fernando* and *Balancing On One Leg* by Wilderness House Press. She's also the editor of *Constellations*, a Journal of Poetry and Fiction

Molly Mattfield Bennett has published in *Ibbetson Street, Off the Coast* and *Solstice,* and was nominated for the Pushcart Prize. Her first book *Name the Glory* was published by Wilderness House Press, and her second *Point-No-Point* was published by FutureCycle Press. Molly is active in the Boston poetry community.

Bruce Black holds an MFA from Vermont College. He is the author of *Writing Yoga* (Shambhala) and editorial director of The Jewish Writing Project. His poetry, personal essays, and stories have appeared in numerous publications, including *The MidAtlantic Review, The Amethyst Review, Write-Haus, Bearings, Poetry Super Highway, Poetica, The Lehrhaus, Soul-Lit,* and elsewhere. He lives in Highland Park, Illinois.

Mary Buchinger is the author of eight poetry collections, including *There Is Only the Sacred and the Desecrated* which received the Paul Nemser Book Prize Honorable Mention*,* and *Navigating the Reach*, which won the 2024 Massachusetts Book Award Honors. Mary teaches at the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences and is a member of Slate Roof Press. Her poetry appears in *AGNI, Nimrod, On the Seawall, Plume, Salt Hill, Seneca Review,* and elsewhere. (www.MaryBuchinger.com)

Ruth Chad is a psychologist who lives and works in Boston. Her poems have appeared in *Les Poesies de The Aurorean, Constellations, Ibbetson Street, Muddy River Poetry Review, Lily Poetry Review, Amethyst Poetry Review* and many other publications. Her chapbook, *The Sound of Angels*, was published in 2017 by Cervena Barva Press. Her later book, *In the Absence of Birds*, was published by Cervena Barva Press in 2024. Ruth was nominated for a Pushcart prize in 2021.

Laura Cherry is the author of the collection *Haunts* (Cooper Dillon Books) and the chapbooks *Two White Beds* (Minerva Rising) and *What We Planted* (Providence Athenaeum). She co-edited the anthology *Poem, Revised* (Marion Street Press) with Robert Hartwell Fiske, and her work has been published in journals including*The Glacier*, *Ekphrastic Review*, *Los Angeles Review*, *Cider Press Review*, and*DMQ Review*. She earned an MFA from the Warren Wilson Program for Writers and lives in the Boston area.

Llyn Clague lives in Sleepy Hollow, NY. His poems have been published widely, including in *Ibbetson Street, Atlanta Review, Wisconsin Review, California Quarterly, Main Street Rag, New York Quarterly,* and other magazines. His ninth book, *Coming Of Age*, was published by Main Street Rag in 2023. Visit www.llynclague.com

Dennis Daly has published eleven books of poetry and poetic translations. His most recent book is *Odd Man Out* (MadHat Press, 2024). Another book of poetry, *Metaphysical Commentaries and Other Poems* (Dos Madres Press), should be released in July of 2026. Also, the new anthology entitled *Uyghur Poems* (Penguin Random House) includes 13 of Daly's translations of Alisher Navoiy. Please see Daly's blog site, Weights and Measures, at dennisfdaly.blogspot.com.

Liz Dolan's second poetry manuscript, *A Secret of Long Life,* published by Cave Moon Press,was nominated for both a Pushcart and the Robert McGovern Prize, Ashland University. Her first poetry collection, *They Abide,* was published by March Street Press. A nine time Pushcart nominee,and also Best of the Net, Liz's short story collection, *Catholic, Practicing*, has just been published by Cave Moon Press. She is the proud grandmother of ten; she hangs with her posse in Rehoboth Beach, Delaware.

Timothy Gager is the author of 20 books of fiction and poetry, which includes his fourth novel, Shadows of the Seen, and his most recent collection of poetry, Almost Bluing for X-Tra Whiteness. He hosted the successful Dire Literary Series in Cambridge, MA from 2001 to 2018, and started a weekly virtual series in 2020. He has had over 1000 works of fiction and poetry published, 19 nominated for the Pushcart Prize. His work also has been nominated for a Massachusetts Book Award, The Best of the Web, The Best Small Fictions Anthology and has been read on National Public Radio.

Harris Gardner co-authored *Chalice of Eros* with Lainie Senechal; the second book, *No Time for* Death, was published in February, 2022; and he has two chapbooks: *Lest They Become* (Ibbetson Street Press) and *Among Us* (Červená Barva Press). He has published 60+ poems in magazines. He has been the Poetry Editor for *Ibbetson Street* magazine since 2010; was co-founder of Tapestry of Voices and the Boston National Poetry Month Festival with Lainie Senechal and led it from 2001-2021. He has also hosted the First and Last Word Poetry Series with Gloria Mindock since 2010. Harris has received several citations, including the Sam Cornish Award from New England Poetry Club in 2023.

Betsy Gitelman writes fiction, essays, poetry, and songs. Her essays have been published in the *Boston Globe* Sunday magazine. She's the author of a history of the Harvard School of Dental Medicine and has ghostwritten books on topics ranging from caregiving to taxes. She published her novel, *Black & White*, in 2025. She is currently writing a musical. When not writing, Betsy enjoys painting, photography, and travel. She lives in Groton, Massachusetts, with her dog, Suki, and cat, Makoto.

Amy Haddad is a poet, nurse, and publisher of Ex Ophidia Press. Her poems appear in various literary journals such as: *Annals of Internal Medicine, Journal of Medical Humanities, Bellevue Literary Review, Aji, Oberon Literary Journal, Cloudbank, Abandoned Mine, Hare's Paw Literary Journal, Rogue Agent Journal, Rinky Dink Press, Intima, Red-Headed Stepchild*, and several anthologies. She has two chapbooks: *The Geography of Kitchens*, (Finishing Line Press, 2021) and *The Most Potent Weapon*, (Bottlecap Press, 2025). Her first poetry collection, *An Otherwise Healthy Woman*, was published by Backwaters Press, 2022.

Patricia L. Hamilton is the author of two full collections, *The Distance to Nightfall* (Main Street Rag Publishing, 2014) and *Even Now* (Kelsay Books, 2025), and the forthcoming chapbook *Voiced* (Kelsay Books). She won the Rash Award in Poetry in 2015 and 2017 and has received three Pushcart Prize nominations. Her work has recently appeared or is forthcoming in *Ibbetson Street, Main Street Rag, Valley Voices, The Windhover,* and *The Christian Century*. A retired professor of English, she lives with her husband in Jackson, Tennessee.

DeWitt Henry's books are *Restless for Words: Poems* (Finishing Line Press,2023); *Foundlings: Found Poems from Prose*, *Trim Reckonings: Poems*, and *Do I Dream or Wake?* (all from Pierian Springs Press, 2024). He was the founding editor of Ploughshares and is Prof. Emeritus at Emerson College. Details at www.dewitthenry.com .

Ruth Hoberman is a writer living in Newtonville, Massachusetts. Since her 2015 retirement from Eastern Illinois University, she has published poems, essays, and reviews in such journals as (most recently) *Solstice, Mom Egg Review, Consequence, Constellations, Nixes Mate,* and *SWWIM Every Day*.

Richard Hoffman is the author of nine books; his two most recent, the poetry collection, *People Once Real,* and *Remembering the Alchemists and Other Essays,* were published in 2023. *Each Child a Disappearance: New & Selected Poems*, and *Mundus et Infans: Selected Suites, Sequences, and Series* will be published in September by Lily. He is Emeritus Writer in Residence at Emerson College and nonfiction editor of *Solstice: A Magazine of Diverse Voices*.

Anna Holstedt is a multidisciplinary artist, writer, and former art gallery owner based on the West Coast of the United States. She creates paintings, drawing collages and photographs, and she writes short stories and poetry. Her work is characterized by naturalistic themes, “mysticism," and gratitude. Anna’s work is inspired by outings Bay Area, the local cultural and arts scene, and recollections of places from the past. Anna is a member of the Cedar Gate Writers, a bi-coastal group that focuses on writing short stories and poetry. Anna participated in the 2021 Boston National Poetry Month Festival and has been published in the *Ibbetson Street*.

Stephen Honig lives in Newton, Massachusetts and practices corporate law when not writing. An author of two novels, a collection of short stories and eight works of poetry, he is proudest of his most recent, a poetic dialog with one of his sons which began with the author’s receipt of his son’s poem which began: “Children, don’t let your daddies grow up to be poets.”

Robert K. Johnson, now retired, is a former Professor of English who taught at Suffolk University for many years. For eight years, he was also Poetry Editor of *Ibbetson Street* magazine. His poems have been published in a wide variety of magazines. His most recent full length collection of poems is *Winterberries*.

George Kalogeris’s most recent book of poems is *Winthropos*, (Louisiana State University, 2021). He is also the author of *Guide to Greece* (LSU, 2018), a book of paired poems in translation, *Dialogo*s, and poems based on the notebooks of Albert Camus, *Camus: Carnets*.

Julia Kanno is a poet/writer/artist from Cambridge, Mass. She graduated from Lesley College, and her poetry has appeared in Ibbetson Street, Lyrical Somerville and elsewhere.

Judy Katz-Levine is the author of three full-length collections of poetry: *When The Arms Of Our Dreams Embrace, Ocarina.* and *The Everything Saint*. Her poems have appeared in *Blue Unicorn, Ibbetson Street, Miriam’s Well, Writing In A Woman’s Voice, Peacock Journal, Fence, The Sun*, and many other journals. She is also a jazz flutist.

Lawrence Kessenich has written poetry, plays, novels, and essays. He won the 2010 Strokestown International Poetry Prize, and his poetry has been published in *Sewanee Review, Atlanta Review, Poetry Ireland Review,* and other magazines. Three of his poems were read on NPR’s *The Writer’s* Almanac and four nominated for the Pushcart Prize. He has published two chapbooks and three full-length books. He has also published three novels, *Cinnamon Girl*, *The Further Adventures of Daisy Miller,* and *The Only Song We Have*, about the creative friendship of Rilke and Rodin. His plays have been performed in several states. All of his books are available on his website: lawrence-writer.com.

Vera Kochanowsky, a career musician, has advanced degrees from The New England Conservatory and Stanford University. A retired choral director, she continues to perform and teach harpsichord. Her deep interest in poetry was awakened after her first trip to Japan in 2024. Her published books include two family histories and a volume of poetry (*101 Haiki: A Journey Through the Seasons*). Her poems have appeared in *Modern Haiku*, *Ibbetson Street*, and the *Maryland Literary Review*. She resides in Falls Church, Virginia. Please visit booksbyvera.com.

Ted Kooser is a long-time contributor to *Ibbetson Street*. A former US Poet Laureate and winner of the Pulitzer Prize, he lives in retirement in rural Nebraska. His most recent collection of poems is *Raft*, from Copper Canyon Press.

Varsha Kukafka is a poet and visual artist. Her poems have been published in journals including AGNI, Salamander, and Intima, a Journal of Narrative Medicine; her visual art has been shown in juried exhibits across the U.S. Most recently, her work combines poetry and visual art through the medium of weaving.

Deborah Leipziger is an author, poet, and advisor on sustainability. Born in Brazil, Deborah's poems have been published in ten countries in such journals as *Salamander, Pensive* and *The Bombay Literary Review.* Her second poetry collection, Tell Me, is available from Lily Poetry Review Books. She is the author of several books on human rights and sustainability. Deborah developed The Lexicon of Change, which shares the language that we need for social and ecological transformation. Her work appears in numerous anthologies including *The Nature of Our Times* and *Tree Lines*. She is inspired by forests and rivers.

Jacquelyn Malone retired from IBM where she was a web writer, editor and manager. She has also taught creative, expository, technical, and scientific writing at various schools, including Gloucester High School, Northeastern University and Salem State University. As a poet, she has been published in numerous literary magazines and won several prizes, including a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship Grant in poetry and a Tupelo Broadside contest.

Eileen McCluskey's poetry has been published in chapbooks: *Divorce Haiku* (once banned) (Origami Poems Project); *Topless* (Main Street Rag). It also appears in *Ibbetson Street, Main Street Rag*, WBUR's Radio Boston, *Boston College Magazine, Rufous City Review*, among others. Poetry recognition includes: Wickford Art Association's 2019 exhibit of poets and painters; finalist, The Poetry Loft 2015 Chapbook Contest; and Cambridge Poetry Awards 2012 competition.

Catherine McGuire is a writer and artist with a deep concern for our planet's future. She has more than six hundred published poems, six poetry chapbooks (*Palimpsests, Inner Quicksand, Feline, Glimpses of A Garden, Joy Into Stillness, Poetry and Chickens*), a full-length poetry book, *Elegy for the 21st Century*, a SF novel, *Lifeline*, and book of short stories*, The Dream Hunt and Other Tales*. Find her at www.cathymcguire.com

Ed Meek has had poems recently in *Plainsongs, The Baltimore Review*, and *Artemis*. His new books are *Great Pond* (poems) and *In the Cooling Twilight* (memoir). *Downward Dog*, a book for children, is coming out this summer.

Gary Metras's 10th book, *Counting Bricks,* will be published this summer by Dos Madres Press. His poems have recently appeared in the literary journals *Cholla Needles, Hiram Poetry Review, Ibbetson Street,* and *Silkworm.* He has worked as a tobacco picker, store clerk, short order cook, mason's tender, air traffic controller, bookstore manager, high school English teacher, letterpress printer, editor and publisher of Adastra Press, and college writing instructor.

David P. Miller's collection, *Bend in the Stair*, was published by Lily Poetry Review Books in 2021. Nixes Mate Books published his *Sprawled Asleep* in 2019. His poems have appeared in *Meat for Tea, FOLIO Literary Journal, Cherry Tree, Second Coming, The Ekphrastic Review*, *The Disappointed Housewife*, and *Blood+Honey*, among other journals. He is a member of the New England Poetry Club's Board of Directors. David is also a member of Boston's Jamaica Pond Poets and co-directs their Chapter and Verse literary reading series.

Bruce Morton divides his time between Montana and Arizona. He is the author of *Planet Mort* (2024) and the chapbook *Olive-drab Khaki Blue*s (2026), both from FootHills Publishing. His poems have appeared in numerous online and print venues. He was formerly dean at the Montana State University library.

Alfred Nicol's collection of poems, *After the Carnival*, was published this spring by Wiseblood Books. His translation of *One Hundred Visions of War* by Julien Vocance has been called "an essential addition to the history of modernist poetry." As part of the music-and-poetry ensemble The Diminished Prophets, Nicol has performed *melopoeia* for over twenty years with Rhina Espaillat and classical/flamenco guitarist John Tavano.

Tomas O'Leary has taught literature, creative writing, and Spanish at the college, high school and elementary levels. For over 20 years he has worked as an expressive therapist with Alzheimer's groups, conversing, singing, playing accordion. His full-length volumes of poetry are *Fool at the Funeral*, *The Devil Take a Crooked House*, and *In the Wellspring of the Ear* (all from Lynx House Press), and *A Prayer for Everyone* (from Ilora Press).

Mark Pawlak is the author of eleven poetry collections, most recently *Special Operation* (Beltway Editions, 2026) and *Away Away* (Arrowsmith Press, 2024), also the memoir *My Deniversity: Knowing Denise Levertov* (MadHat Press, 2021). His essay "Between Equations and Elegies" just appeared in the journal Arrowsmith #34. He is retired from the University of Massachusetts Boston, where he taught mathematics and received the Chancellors Achievement Award.

Marge Piercy has published 20 poetry collections, 17 novels, including *Sex Wars*. PM Press reissued *Vida* and *Dance the Eagle to Sleep*; they brought out short stories *The Cost of Lunch, Etc* and *My Body, My Life* (essays, poems}. She has read at over 575 venues here and abroad. Her most recent book, *The Hour of My Death*, will be published by Sibylline Press.

Reizel Polak is a psychotherapist in private practice with extensive background working with kids at risk. Her poems have been widely published, including by *Black Jasmine Pamphlets, Annals of Internal Medicine, North of Oxford, Ibbetson Street,* and *Greville Press Pamphlets* in the UK. She studies classical piano as a devoted amateur. She is a devotee of reading Middle East History and the works of Jorge Luis Borges.

Denise Provost has published two poetry collections, and in *Ibbetson Street, Muddy River, Praxis, Poetry Porch, Constellations,* and *Light Quarterly*. Twice Pushcart-nominated, Provost won Best Love Sonnet in the 2012 Maria C. Faust Sonnet Competition and the 2021 Samuel Washington Allen Prize. She served as co-president of New England Poetry Club 2022 -2024.

Steven Ratiner is the author of *Grief's Apostrophy*, published by Beltway Editions in 2025. He's also published three poetry chapbooks and a collection of poetry interviews, and appeared in several anthologies. His work has appeared in scores of journals in America and abroad—and been translated into Mandarin, Spanish, Ukrainian, and Hebrew. He's also written poetry criticism for *The Washington Post, The Christian Science Monitor, The San Francisco Chronicle,* and *The Washington Post*. *Giving Their Word: Conversations with Contemporary Poets* was reissued in a paperback edition (University of

Massachusetts Press). He is Poet Laureate Emeritus for Arlington, Massachusetts and the current President of the New England Poetry Club. His weekly Red Letter Poems features a diverse range of poets, from up-and-coming talents to some of the most important voices in contemporary poetry. (steven.arlingtonlaureate@gmail.com).

Hilary Sallick Hilary Sallick is the author of *Love is a Shore* (Lily Poetry Books, 2023), long-listed for the Massachusetts Book Award, and *Asking the Form* (Cervena Barva Press, 2020). Her poems appear or are forthcoming in *Potomac Review, Vita Poetica, Pensive, Inflectionist Review, Ibbetson Street*, *SoFloPoJo,* and elsewhere. She is a teacher with a longtime focus on adult literacy. She lives in Somerville, Massachusetts. (www.hilarysallick.com)

Carla Schwartz's poems have appeared in her collections *Signs of Marriage*, and *Intimacy with the Wind*. Learn more at https://carlapoet.com, or on all social media @cb99videos. Recent/upcoming curations: *Cider Press Review, Drifting Sands Haibun, Frog Pond, Modern Haiku, New Verse Review, North Dakota Quarterly, One Art, Pan Haiku Review,* and *Rattle.* Carla Schwartz received the 2023 New England Poetry Club E.E. Cummings Prize.

Claire Scott is an award-winning poet who has received multiple Pushcart Prize nominations. Her work has appeared in the *Atlanta Review, Bellevue Literary Review, New Ohio Review* and *Healing Muse*, among other journals. Claire is the author of *Waiting to be Called* and *Until I Couldn't.* She is the co-author of *Unfolding in Light: A Sisters' Journey in Photography and Poetry.*

Zvi A. Sesling, Brookline, MA Poet Laureate (2017-2020), is a five-time Puschcart Prize nominee He has published poems and flash fiction. He edits *Muddy River Poetry Review* and *10By10 Flash Fiction Stories.* He published four poetry books and three poetry chapbooks and three flash fiction chapbook. His *Selected and New Poetry* and his short stories *Infidelities* are due out . He lives in Brookline, Massachusetts with his wife Susan J. Dechter.

Dr. Roger Singer is a Poet Laureate Emeritus of Connecticut, and past president of the Connecticut Shoreline Poetry Chapter, in association with the Connecticut Poetry Society. He has had over 1,700 poems published on the internet, magazines and in books and is a Pushcart Prize Award Nominee.

Priscilla Turner Spada is a Powow River Poet and helps organize their monthly readings in Newburyport, Massachusetts. Her poems and artwork are in numerous publications including many *Ibbetson Street* issues; *Merrimac Mic* anthologies; *Quill & Parchment* online literary magazines; and *Lark Books* art publications. She has a chapbook *Light in Unopened Windows,* and a manuscript in the works. She has been featured at many regional venues: Actor's Studio, Nbypt; Bunker Hill CC; Lawrence International Book Fairs; Rockport Poetry Fest, winning prizes judged by international juries.

Michael Todd Steffen's poetry has appeared in journals, including *The Boston Globe*, *The Dark Horse*, *Nixes Mate, The Exacting Clam*, and *spoKe*. Boris Dralyuk (editor of *Nimrod Journal*) writes, *Steffen's lines are supple and wear their unmistakable wisdom lightly.* His third collection, *I Saw My Life*, was released in April by Lily Press [lilypoetryreview.blog/i-saw-my-life-by-michael-steffen/]

Ellen Steinbaum is the author of five poetry collections and a one-person play. Her work has been nominated twice for the Pushcart Prize and is included in several anthologies. She is also an award-winning journalist and former Boston Globe columnist.

Tim Suermondt's seventh full-length book of poems *A Day In The Republic* came out in late 2025 from Dos Madres Press. He has published in *Poetry, Ploughshares, Prairie Schooner, The Georgia Review, Bellevue Literary Review, Stand Magazine, Smartish Pace, Barrow Street, Amsterdam Review* and *Plume*, among many others. He lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts with his wife, the poet Pui Ying Wong.

Daniel Tobin is the author of twenty books of poems, essays, edited works. His poetry has won many awards as well as fellowships from the NEA and the Guggenheim Foundation. His latest books are *The Mansions* (Four Way Books), *From the Distances of Sleep* (Staircase Books), *The Odeon: Essays on Poetry* (LSU), *Dusk Empire: New and Selected Poem*s (Four Way Books).

Keith Tornheim has six books of poetry, *Fireflies: Poems of Love and Family*; *I Am Lilith, Dancer on the Wind*; *Spoiled Fruit: Adam and Eve in Eden and Beyond; Spirit Boat: Poems of Crossing Over*; *Can You Say Kaddish for the Living?*; *The Sacrifice of Isaac*. His poems have appeared in *Ibbetson Street*, *The Somerville Times*, *Boston Literary Magazine, Muddy River Poetry Review* and *Poetica*.

Paulette Demers Turco pairs her art and poetry in *Shimmer, an ekphrastic poetry collection* (Kelsay Books, 2023). She is editor of *The Powow River Poets Anthology II* (Able Muse Press, 2021) and co-organizer and host of Powow River Poets monthly readings. Her chapbook *In Silence* was released by Finishing Line Press (2018). Her poetry appears in *The Lyric, Ibbetson Street, The Poetry Porch, Mezzo Cammin, Loch Raven Review, Quill & Parchment*, *Pulsebeat Poetry Journal*, and others. Awards include The Robert Frost Poetry Prize and nomination for a Pushcart Prize. She lives in Newburyport, MA.

Chris Warner, M.Ed., CYT, ISTT, lives in the US, north of Boston, with her husband and their beloved Japanese Chin, Hoshi-Kei. In addition to being a poet, she is also an international trauma therapist and addiction recovery specialist. Chris's poetry has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize, and she has led public writing workshops as well as taught Mindfulness & Creative Writing groups to inmates in Massachusetts corrections facilities since 2012. Chris is working—albeit quite gently—toward her first book of poetry.

Joyce Wilson is editor of *The Poetry Porch*, a literary magazine on the Internet since 1997. Her poems have appeared in many literary journals, among them *Alabama Literary Review*, *The Hudson Review*, and *Mezzo Cammin*. A sequence of poems "The Octagonal Schoolhouse" won the Samuel Washington Allen Honorable Mention Prize from the New England Poetry Club in 2023. Her new poetry collection *The Morning After Burns Night* is just out, summer 2026.

Elizabeth S. Wolf has published 6 books, including the Rattle chapbook *Did You Know?* (2019). Her latest book is a braided poetry collection, *Parenting in the Age of Columbine* (2025). Her work appears in many journals and anthologies, including *Rattle, ONE ART, The Strategic Poet,* and *Ibbetson Street* and is archived on the moon in the Lunar Codex. Elizabeth has received 4 Pushcart nominations and featured in the April 2026 issue of *Boston Literary Magazine*.

Pui Ying Wong's recent book of poetry *Fanling In October* won the Barrow Street Editors Prize. She is also the author of three other poetry collections: *The Feast, An Emigrant's Winter* and *Yellow Plum Season* along with two chapbooks: *Sonnet For a New Country* and *Mementos*. She has received a Pushcart Prize. Her poems have appeared in many journals including *Ploughshares, Prairie Schooner, Plume,* and others. Born in Hong Kong she now lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts with her husband, the poet Tim Suermondt.

Xiadi Zhai is from Boston, Massachusetts. A graduate of the Iowa Writers' Workshop, she has recent or forthcoming work in *Bennington Review*, *F(r)iction*, *MudRoom*, *Passages North*, and *Quarterly West*, among others.